The Maharshi

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ATMANANDA VISITS THE MAHARSHI

Atmananda was a young, accomplished Austrian musician whose interest in Theosophy first took her on a visit to India in 1925 at the age of twenty-one. She later became an ardent follower of J. Krishnamurti and returned to India in 1935 to teach at the Krishnamurti School near Benares. By 1942 she became despondent and left the school in search of a means to assuage the inner crisis that had engulfed her. This brought her to the Maharshi from whom she sought clarity, peace and direction. From the excerpts of her diary below it is apparent that during her six-week stay in Tiruvannamalai she was granted that, and more.

The diaries of Atmananda were edited by Ram Alexander and published by Indica Books under the title "Death Must Die". The book contains the intimate story of a sincere seeker who ultimately finds her way to peace and security under the loving guidance of Anandamayi Ma. Atmananda died in Benares in 1985 and at her funeral was given the utmost honor and respect accorded a sanyasini of the highest order.

Ramanashram, Tiruvannamalai, 17 May 1942

I left Benares on the 10th May. As the train approached Tiruvannamalai, I suddenly felt blissfully happy, thinking, 'Now all struggle is over, there will be only peace. The prodigal son has returned to his father's house.' After some time this passed.

Upon arriving, my first reaction was to run away. The ashramites and the prostrations and adoration of the Guru seem all mad to me.

I wrote a letter to Ramana Maharshi asking him to straighten the twists in me. In his presence there is a deep peace, the same that I have felt ever since I decided to come here.

26 May, 1942

At about 12.30 a. m. I woke up and had a strange experience, which I cannot put into words. It was not imagination and seemed beyond the mind altogether, but I was wide awake. I realized a fiery 'being' of terrific power without form of any kind and I understood what it is that one worships and why people prostrate in front of the Maharshi. It has nothing to do with him as I see him daily, but it seemed to be simultaneously him, God and also myself. What I usually call myself was ridiculous at that moment, so petty and insignificant as was also the body of the Maharshi. I could not imagine that I would ever be the same hereafter. This state was very real. I was wide awake for hours and it persisted for sometime....

31 May, 1942

Questions for Ramana:

(1) If the mind seems utterly confused and muddled, what is the first step in order to get clear?

(2) In one of the books of your dialogues you say that such thoughts as "Is this a good thing to do or is that" should not be allowed. How can one live and decide without such considerations?

(3) At times I am completely at peace and at other times all restlessness. There seems no connection at all between these two conditions. Why is that?

3 June, 1942

Answer for question No. 2: "If you surrender to the Supreme Will, there will be no question of decision or choice."

Question: But I don't know the Supreme Will. I do not know to whom to surrender. How do I know the Supreme? I may deceive myself.

Answer: It is the mind that deceives itself. At least you must admit that you exist. Either you accept the

Supreme or at least enquire into the true nature of your self. Who are you? Knowing or not knowing belongs to the mind and therefore all your so called 'knowledge' is really ignorance. You identify yourself with the mind and that is the cause of the confusion. Enquire more deeply into the true nature of your individuality (i.e., Who is it that possesses a mind?). In fact, if you perceive that the mind does not exist at all, then it will vanish along with the confusion, and what truly is will stand revealed. When you look at your reflection in the water and believe it to be an accurate representation of yourself, then you are troubled when the movement of the water disturbs the reflection. But when you realize that this has no reality to it, then your worries cease. You cannot get rid of your shadow, but you need not believe that it is who you really are.

Question: I feel as if I were two and not one.

Answer: No, there is only the Self, there cannot be two. But if you focus only on the form of the bangle, you may forget that it is made of gold. Yet the form of the bangle is dependent on the gold. It cannot exist without it and ceases to exist when the gold is melted down; but the gold itself remains constant. By deluding yourself into identifying solely with the mind, you deny your true Self. This is worse than suicide, because in suicide you only kill the body; but here you are murdering the Self. Seek the Self and the ego will vanish.

By solving one mind-created problem you only create new ones. When you cut off one leaf, four new ones sprout out. Only by killing the root of the tree, can you prevent the leaves from growing.

17 June 1942

Question: When I asked you how to solve the problems of life, you said "Self surrender." How can one surrender without danger until Self realization has been achieved, as the mind may create its own God to surrender to? The most cruel things in the world are done in the name of God.

Maharshi: The mind and all of its creations come from the same source. Self-enquiry and Self-surrender are the same. As you proceed in Self-enquiry you automatically surrender (as you become nearer to the Divine Source). The person that surrenders to a mind-created God will have to bear the consequences of his

Atmananda sitting to the side of Anandamayi Ma

actions and suffer for them. But even the thought of God, however false, will take you to the Supreme Truth of the Self ultimately. The man who has realized, knows that the thought of a separate God is utterly false. But until then one cannot help it. When you are totally still, you are the Self. When we think, we are forgetting God. Self-enquiry leads back to Him (who is none other than the Self).

Question: Ultimately, but it may take a long time!

Maharshi: There is no time. You may have it even now.

Someone else's question: If the Self is one, why is it necessary to approach a Guru?

Maharshi: In reality it is not necessary, but because we are dreaming on the physical plane, the presence of the realized man is necessary to wake us up – to remind us of ourselves. When the proud elephant dreams that a lion comes, he gets a shock and wakes up suddenly. As we are all dreaming, the help of the Guru, within this dream, is necessary in order to force us to wake up. The eyes of the Guru disperse the dream.

Question: The physical eyes?

Maharshi: There are only 'eyes', not physical or otherwise.

Miss Merston's question: From where does the 'resolve' come to start the Self-enquiry?

Maharshi: From the mind, like all other thoughts. But by having only one single thought, this thought finally also gets absorbed. You need not follow your thoughts; the more you think the more thoughts there will be. But rather take each thought back to its source. That is surrender and enquiry at the same time.

Questioner: Why are you unable to refuse when others prevail on you for this or that? Are you not free of karma and therefore able to do as you like?

Maharshi: There are three types of karma:

(1) Made by one's own actions and desires.

(2) Inevitable karma like Government — world circumstances beyond your personal control.

(3) The karma of others taken on himself by the man who is free of his own karma.

Questioner: Is it like Christ, who suffers for the sins of others?

Maharshi: Yes. There is no freedom, it [freedom] is merely a word (i.e., even Christ or the realised saint still must fulfill his destiny outwardly, although inwardly he is fully liberated).

Yesterday my old agony of restlessness returned, and with it my fear…. I had back ache, head ache and tummy ache and utter misery. This in turn made me resentful at feeling somewhat bound. But this morning I suddenly got back my peace after deciding to talk to Bhagavan and to ask him why I can't get rid of my egotistical resistance. As I asked him the question tears came. The answer was: "Take the resistance into your heart and keep it there."

I have to do everything from the heart. Let the heart see, hear, think, speak, eat, sleep – everything – and not do anything else. Though I do not know the Lord of my Heart, whoever He is, I must surrender to Him and leave all else. It is very difficult to do in practice…. I shall take Him into my heart and will clear this problem by the time I leave. That is the real reason for my visit.

I feel that I could have gotten much more out of this place if I could have let go of more my judgmental ego.

From the *Ashtavakra Gita*:

"When the mind is freed from such pairs of opposites as 'this is done' and 'this is not done' it becomes indifferent to religious merit, worldly prosperity, desire for sensual enjoyment and for liberation.

"The one who abhors sense objects avoids them, and one who covets them becomes attached to them. But he who does not accept or reject, is neither unattached nor attached.

"He who has an egoistic feeling even towards liberation and considers even the body as his own is neither an *jnani* nor a yogi. He only suffers misery."

27 June 1942

Upon reading King Janaka's story in the Ashtavakra Gita about how the Rishi Ashtavakra taught him Self-realisation after Janaka had accepted him as his Guru and surrendered completely to him, a sudden surrender to the Maharshi arose in me spontaneously and his outer form vanished.

I feel more and more that Madras (which is so much closer to Ramana) will be better for me to live in than Delhi. The company of the Wise, whilst we are yet ignorant, is the most precious thing to seek.

Rajghat, 3 July 1942

On the 28th of June, the last day at Tiruvannamalai, I wanted to know how I should live after leaving there. The answer came in the form of an experience in which the Maharshi's head suddenly seemed to go inside me and he said: "You, ego, get out. I am now dictator here and whatever I tell you, you have to do. Not a breath without my order. I am your Self until you have realised It." To my own surprise I loved the dictator. That is what I have always wanted. I am going to cling to him every moment and I shan't rest till he has absorbed the last atom of me. Then I shall again be where I want to be...

In the train my thoughts stayed in Tiruvannamalai. When the train crossed the bridge, Mother Ganges told me a secret: You will not always be with the Maharshi.

Who is our Friend?

While going up the Hill, Sri Bhagavan referred to the misunderstanding between two prominent devotees and wanted me to convey to them the following message: "Whoever condemns us is our friend. For he condemns only our body which is our enemy. The enemy's enemy is the best friend, is he not? We should really beware of those who praise us."

Whom It Chooses

Someone asked, "It is stated in the scriptures that the Self will reveal itself only to one whom it chooses. Then what is the use of our effort?"

Sri Bhagavan replied: "The Self will draw unto itself an aspirant only when he becomes introverted. So long as he is extroverted, Self-Realisation is impossible. Many people try to define the Self instead of attempting to know the Self and abide in It."

—from Sri Ramana Reminiscences

THIRD ANNIVERSARY

IN THE EARLY hours of April 10, 2000, Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat, the founder of Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center, New York and Nova Scotia, Canada quietly shuffled off his mortal frame. To remember this day, and his life of complete devotion and dedication, devotees and family members gathered in the New York Ashrama on April 10th, 2003. Following along with one of his recordings, they recited his favorite hymn to the Divine Mother, "Sri Lalita Sahasranam Stotram" and took turns reading from his voluminous 'Prayer Manuscripts'. Half a page in its original typewritten format is printed below.

3333 ---------- BHAGAVAN! THOU ART THE SELF; Wednesday, August 15, 1973

THOU MAKETH ME EXPERIENCE THEE IN THE CAVITY OF THE LOTUS OF MY HEART, LORD!

Oh the Abode of JNANA and BHAKTI, Sri Ramana Arunachala Parabrahman! Prostrations and salutations to Thy Lotus Feet thousands upon thousands of times for giving me the rarest opportunity of hearing Thy Name and becoming merged in the Holy Hill of the Beacon Light. There has never been the least shadow of doubt within my mind as to the ultimate mission that I must carry out with Thy Infinite Grace and Mercy. The complete and total abidance in the Self in the inmost recesses of my Heart is the mission with which Thou hast charged me and now it is for Thee to take the work from me for which I have been given the body. In each and everything of this creation Thou art pervading and permeating and teaching me day and night I must leave behind the world of duality and become dissolved into the Holy Hill of the Beacon Light. I know this much only that Thou maketh me dive deeper and deeper into the widest expanse of my Heart so that I could experience Thy Glorious and Gracious Presence all the time. My whole body is seized with the chanting and recitation of Thy Powerful Name 'OM NAMO BHAGAVATE SRI RAMANAYA' and I am trying my level best to hold on to the Self, nothing but the Self and thereby become merged in Thee once and for all. This much has always been abundantly clear as a crystal to me that without Thy Infinite Grace and Mercy I shall never be able to cross the sea of births and deaths, Sri Ramana Arunachala!

Thou art ever gleaming, glimmering, glistening, glittering, glowing and shining as 'I, I' within the lotus of my Heart and teaching me to abide in the Self day and night and become merged in the Holy Hill of the Beacon Light. Thou plungeth my breath into the depths of my Heart and thereby remindeth me to abide therein all the time and become free from the objects of the sense world. Each and every expiration and inspiration of my breath makes me turn to the Source in the Heart and abide therein without the least difficulty. Thou maketh me drink the nectar of Thy Name so that the bonds and bondages of births and rebirths could be cut asunder once and for all....

The Silent One possessed me in Silence
and poured into me a speechless word
that was the seed of wisdom.
That word, O friend. had a magic effect on my life.
It hushed up the mind and opened my heart
to the silent embrace of the Divine. —Thayumanavar

With heart surging in love and melting within;
With words faltering in joyous confusion;
With eyes streaming tears
And hands folded in meekness,
Let us Thy Grace contemplate.
—Thayumanavar

Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana

By Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni
Translated by Dr. Anil K. Sharma
(Continued from Nov/Dec 2002 issue)

dharme nāśamupāgate tribhuvane paryākule pāpataḥ
prajñāne parito girāṁ pathi mudhā sañcāryamāṇe janaiḥ।
sadbhāve parameśvarasya ca pituḥ sandehaḍolāṁ
gatedvīpaḥ kaitavamartya kekituraga tvāmantarā
kassatām।।18।।

dharme - when dharma, *nāśam* - destroyed, *upāgate* - when has been, *tribhuvane* - when the three worlds, *paryākule* - bewildered, confused, *āpataḥ* - from wrong-doing, *prajñāne* - when true knowledge, *parito* - everywhere, *girāṁ* - of words, *pathi* - way, course, *mudhā* - in vain, *sañcāryamāṇe* - being brought together, collected, *janaiḥ* - by men, *sadbhāve* - when true existence, *parameśvarasya* - of the supreme Lord, *ca* - and, *pituḥ* - of the Father, *sandeha* - doubt, *ḍolāṁ* - swing, gate - has gone, *dvīpaḥ* - protector, refuge, *kaitava* - deceit, *martya* - mortal, *kekituraga* - peacock as a mount, *tvām* - you, *antarā* - except, *kas* - who, *satām* - of the good

When dharma has been destroyed, when the three worlds are bewildered by wrong doing, when scholars everywhere declare words (polemics) as true knowledge, when the true existence of the supreme Lord the Father is doubted, who but you is the refuge of the good, O peacock-mounted one, disguised as a man (Skanda)?

vairāgyaṁ tava vittamastu karunām śaknoṣi hātuṁ
kathaṁdūṣyasthe'stu samudyamaḥ pitṛapadadhyānaṁ
ca kiṁ tādṛśam।
kāmaste'stu vigarhito vinamatām rakṣā ca kiṁ garhitā
skanda cchadmamanuṣya kinnu samayaṁ kañcit
samudvīkṣase।।19।।

vairāgyaṁ - dispassion, *tava* - yours, *vittam* - accquistion, wealth, *astu* - maybe, *karunām* - compassion, *śaknoṣi* - you can, *hātuṁ* - to fosake, *kathaṁ* - how, *dūṣyas* - vile, reprehensible, *te* - to you, *astu* - may be, *samudyamaḥ* - great effort, *pitṛ* - Father, *pada* - feet, *dhyānaṁ* - meditation, *ca* - and, *kiṁ* - is, *tādṛśam* - of that kind, *kāmas* - desire, *te* - to you, *astu* - maybe, *vigarhito* - prohibited, *vinamatām* - of those bowing (devotees) *rakṣā* - protection, *ca* - and, *kiṁ* - is, *garhitā* - forbidden, denied, *skanda* - O Skanda, *cchadma* - disguise, *manuṣya* - man, *kinnu* - do, *samayaṁ* - occasion, opportunity, *kañcit* - some, *samudvīkṣase* - await

Dispassion may be your weatlh, but how can you forsake compassion? Great effort may seem reprehensibile, but what of meditation on the feet of the Father? Desire may be prohibited by you, but is protection denied to your devotees? O Skanda, in the disguise of a man, do you await a proper opportunity?

dūraṁ yāhi kuvāda dharmavṛṣa te netaḥ paraṁ
paṅgutādurbhrānte buvanaṁ jahīhi parito vardhasva
saṁsatsatām।
sodaryeṇa samanvito bhuvamimāṁ prāpto
gurugrāmaṇīḥ śūrāntaḥ puranetra vibhramaharo devo
bhavānīsutaḥ।।20।।

dūraṁ far, at a distance, *yāhi* - go, *kuvāda* - detracting, *dharmavṛṣa* - bull of dharma, *te* - your, *netaḥ (na itaḥ)* - from here, *paraṁ* - afterwards, *paṅgutā* - lameness, *durbhrānte* - O confusion, *buvanaṁ* - world, *jahīhi* - leave, *parito* - everywhere, *vardhasva* - may increase, prosper, *saṁsat* - association, *satām* - of virtuous, *sodaryeṇa* - with brother, *samanvito* - associated with, *bhuvam* - world, *imāṁ* - this, *prāpto* - obtained, *guru* - guru, *grāmaṇīḥ* - leader, chief, *śūra* - the demon Shura, *antaḥpura* - females, wives of Shura, *netra* - eyes, *vibhrama* - amorous, *haro* - destroyer, *devo* - Lord, *bhavānī* - Parvati, *sutaḥ* - son

O detraction, go far away! Bull of Dharma, henceforth you will not be lame! Leave the world, O confusion. May association with the virtuous increase everywhere! In association with his brother (Ganapati), this world has obtained the chief of gurus (Ramana). He is the destroyer of the demon Sura and of the amorous passions, Lord, son of the Divine Mother Parvati.

Children's Ashrama in Nova Scotia

The Sri Ramana Children's Ashrama will be conducted at the Nova Scotia Ashrama on

August 18 through August 22

If you wish to have your children attend, or wish to attend with your children, please call.

Darlene: (902) 665-2263 / New York Ashrama: (718) 575-3215

Letters and Comments

Illness and Depression

I have read Ramana's books many times and now I suffer from arthritis and depression. The depression keeps me from meditating and the Zoloft prescribed makes me numb. Can you recommend some kind of help or helper to me. I thank you in advance for whatever you can recommend.

I know of only one solution: surrender, petition, prayer, perseverance and faith.

When we know for certain that we are unable to attain happiness by our own efforts, we must, with devotion and faith, turn to the Almighty and place our burden on Him. A helpless kitten simply cries and the mother cat feeds it, bathes it, carries it from place to place and protects it. We have to cry from the bottom of our heart to the Omnipresent Lord who creates and sustains this infinite universe of diverse dimensions. I am certain that if you do this with sincere devotion your petition will be heard and the suffering will be relieved. How it is relieved may not be in the manner you imagine, but the burden will be lifted just the same and you will feel bathed in the pure waters of peace and blessedness.

Editor

The Real Doer

One question if you don't mind. Bhagavan recommends reminding ourself that we are not the doer of the actions — it is the Supreme Power that takes care of everything. Yet, this Supreme Power is not different than the Self, right? So in a sense we are the doer, right? It seems to me the reminder is that the ego is not the doer of the action. Is my understanding clear?

Your understanding is clear. When we succeed in ceasing to identify ourselves with the ego, body

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs and meditation are held in a few places near or in large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these and meet followers of Sri Ramana Maharshi in your area, please contact the individuals below for more information.

Boston Area — David & Anna Klegon (617-928-1487 / dklegon@rcn.com)
Detroit, Ann Arbor Area — Prashanth & Shobana (734-327-0109 / prashvis@hotmail.com)
Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-423-7324) / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)
Washington, D.C. Area — Prakash & Mamtha Adiseshan (703-502-4892 / adiseshan@worldnet.att.net)
Miami, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Rubinson (954-755-4758 / arunahill@earthlink.net)
San Francisco Area — Swaminathan & Sangeeta (510-324-1160 / nachiketas@hotmail.com)
Toronto, Canada — Krishnan & Padma Sastri (905-849-6005 / psastri@hotmail.com)
Ottawa, Canada — Anantha Padmanabhan (713-733-8250 / padmanabhan_ananth@hotmail.com)

and mind, when we know by experience that only the one Self exists, the actions of the body will go on without individual will or the feeling of doership. Until that time arrives this idea of being the non-doer is only a concept. This concept and the faith that the All-Powerful is alone the All-Doer and we are just instruments in Its hands, help us to detach ourselves from the body-mind identity, which in essence is the ego.

Editor

'Who am I?' and Thoughts

If you have a moment to reply about the 'Who am I?' practice, I would be grateful. After asking 'Who am I?', I immediately have thoughts — notice my breathing, hear a sound and know what it is, have a sensation of warmth in my forehead, or have the thought that I am waiting for a reply, etc.

If I count these kind of thoughts as thoughts, I go to the 'To whom is this thought occurring?' question almost immediately and then end up repeating these two questions with the answer 'to me' over and over again, almost like a mantra.

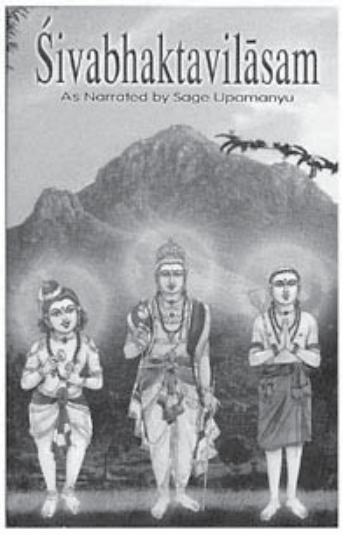
But if I wait for the mind to start wandering to something that is not related to the inquiry, and not a thought relating to the outer environment, then there is more of a pause.

Is it better to wait for the mind to wander away like this before asking the second question? Or should I go to the second question as soon as I notice my breathing or the sound of a dog barking, etc.?

The 'Who Am I?' inquiry is a means to effect subsidence of the mind into the Heart. The more silent your mind is when the inquiry is made, the quicker the results. That is why preliminary methods of stilling the mind are sometimes recommended. Pranayama (breath control), or simply watching the breath, can help for quieting the mind. Just to watch the breath, its incoming and outgoing, is one method prescribed by Sri Maharshi. It will spontaneously lead to the suspension of thoughts. At such quiet times you can hold onto the 'I – thought' to the exclusion of all else and the mind can, with the Guru's grace, sink into the Heart.

You can adopt whatever practice helps in quieting the thoughts. But know that you must sink into your Source, the Self, ultimately, and that Self-inquiry is a direct means to do this. It may not appear practicable now, but at some point when the wheel of thoughts comes to a slow roll, or stops, you will find it immensely useful.

Editor



Śivabhaktavilasam

As Narrated by Sage Upamanyu

Translated by Dr. Lingeswara Rao

This new, attractive publication from Sri Ramanasramam tells the story of the 63 Nayanmars described in the Periapuranam. Punctuated with many illustrations, the stories are narrated in simple devotional prose, providing more interesting details on the lives of many of the prominent saints. The Maharshi often related stories from the original Sanskrit text, which has not been available in English till now. A detailed Appendix and Glossary, a facsimile of the Maharshi's handwriting and other special elements incorporated into this volume endow it with a special charm.

459 pages, $13.00

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